STALACTITE

CARLOS DE OLIVEIRA (TRANSLATION BY ALEXIS LEVITIN)

I
The limestone sky
of the hollow hill,
where sullen drops
of water or of stone
will fall
a few millennia from now
and waken
tenuous flowers
in calcified corollas
so close to me
I think I hear, filtering
through the tunnel
of time, and of this hill,
the garden’s dew.

II
To imagine
the sound of dew,
the slow contraction
of petals, the weight of
water
at such a distance,
to register
in that inverted
memory
the rhythm of dissolving
stone
as it settles
drop by drop
on those anticipated flowers.

V
Space
so that
drops of water
or of stone may fall
carried
by their weight,
smooth angularities
of the silent
hill
so limestone
may flower
in this calligraphy
of petals
and of letters.

VIII
They fall
from a limestone sky,
they will waken flowers
millennia from now,
they roll
from line
to line
closed
like droplets,
and at the end
of the page
one hears
dew-laden
murmurings.

IX
The image
the sound of dew,
to transmit it
from flower to flower,
to guide it
gradually thickening
through space
where now
it moves
[water → limestone],
and to capture it as if
it were born
only
as it is written.

XI
The weight
of the water
at such a distance
is almost
imperceptible,
and yet it weighs,
hovers,
settles on the page,
a past
of stone
[limestone ← hill]
that burns
as it
falls.

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Stalactite that will be pub-
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tion, and in the book
Guernica and Other Poems
by Carlos de Oliveira, which
is to be published in
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Carlos
de Oliveira (1921-1981) was
a Brazilian novelist, poet,
and painter. His poetry
reveals neo-realist, symbol-
ist, surrealist, and cubist ten-
dencies.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR:
Alexis Levitin of SUNY-
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